

Message Text

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FOLLOWING TEL BOMBAY 0289 DTD 04 FEB 76 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: TGEN, PFOR, US, IN

SUBJ: ALLEGED RADIOACTIVITY FROM TARAPUR POWER STATION

REF: NEW DELHI 1673

1. I HAD LONG TOK TODAY WITH J.C. SHAH, CHAIRMAN OF INDIAN ATOMIC POWER AUTHORITY, ABOUT ALLEGATIONS OF RADIOACTIVITY DANGERS AT TARAPUR. HE SAID IAEC IS ALSO SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS SPATE OF REPORTS AND SAID IT IMPORTANT THAT TWO GOVERNMENTS USE SOME BASIC SET OF FACTS IN RESPONDING TO THE INEVITABLE SERIES OF INQUIRIES THAT NOW MUST BE EXPECTED. TO THIS END, HE SAID IAEC CHAIRMAN SETHNA HAD EARLIER THIS WEEK CABLED NRC CHAIRMAN ANDERS STATING THAT IAEC KNEW OF NO NEW DEVELOPMENTS THAT COULD HAVE STIMULATED REPORTS ABOUT RADIOACTIVITY PROBLEM AT TARAPUR. SETHNA ALSO NOTED THAT IAEC AT DISADVANTAGE IN DEFENDING ITSELF AGAINST CHARGES ARISING IN US BECAUSE IT DOES NOT HAVE TEXT OF BASIC DOCUMENTS SUCH AS SENATE PROCEEDINGS OR NEW YORK TIMES STORY THAT SHAH UNDERSTANDS WAS PRINTED OVER LAST WEEKEND OR ON MONDAY. HE ASKED ANDERS TO SUPPLY WHAT INFORMATION HE HAD AND URGED ANDERS TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH AS THIS MATTER DEVELOPS.

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2. SHAH SAID HE WAS ALERTED TO PROBLEM BY GE LAST FRIDAY

(EARLIER THIS MORNING GE TOLD ME SAME THING) WHICH URGED HIM TO BE PREPARED WITH STATEMENT WHEN STORY HIT PRESS WIRES HERE. SHAH SAID THAT AS RESULT OF GE INITIATIVE PRESS WAS ABLE TO PRINT HIS REFUTATION IS SAME ISSUES THAT CARRIED SAGAR STORY.

3. SEVERAL TIMES DURING DISCUSSION SHAH INDICATED THAT WHILE HE IS FULLY CONFIDENT THAT TARAPUR OPERATION IS A SAFE ONE AND THAT RADIOACTIVITY EMISSIONS THERE ARE WELL WITHIN TOLERABLE LIMITS CONTINUING PROBLEMS WITH THIS PLANT MAKE A PUBLIC DEFENSE DIFFICULT. TARAPUR STILL SUFFER FROM DEFECTIVE FUEL WHICH GIVES RISE TO LEAKAGES WHICH IN TURN OF COURSE RAISE RADIOACTIVITY LEVELS. THERE HAVE BEEN OVER 200 DESIGN CHANGES SINCE INSTALLATION OF PLANT WHICH GIVES AN INDICATION OF SCALE PROBLEMS IN GETTING TARAPUR TO ITS CURRENT SAFE AND EFFICIENT LEVEL OF OPERATIONS.

4. SHAH'S MAIN TECHNICAL POINTS IN DEFENSE OF TARAPUR SAFETY ARE:

A) ANNUAL WHOLE BODY DOSE OF RADIOACTIVITY DUE TO INTAKE FROM LAND AND WATER SOURCES IN TARAPUR AREA INCLUDING SEA FOOD TAKEN BY FISHERMEN WHICH REPRESENT THE MOST EXPOSED GROUP OF POPULATION IS ABOUT 12.5 MILLIREMS (PER ANNUM, I BELIEVE). IN ADDITION AIR EMISSIONS FROM PLANT REPRESENT ANOTHER 17.5 MILLIREMS BRINGING TOTAL RADIOACTIVITY FROM PLANT TO 30 MILLIREMS. THIS IS 12 PERCENT OF MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE LIMIT OF 250 MILLIREMS AND REPRESENTS ONLY HALF OF NATURAL BACKGROUND RADIOACTIVITY LEVEL WHICH WAS 60 MILLIREMS PER ANNUM IN TARAPUR AREA BEFORE START UP OF PLANT.

B) TARAPUR HAS ITS OWN ON-SITE RADIATION MONITORING LABORATORY WHICH OVER TIME HAS CONSISTENTLY CONFIRMED ABOVE FIGURES.

C) TARAPUR HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY IN LAST THREE YEARS PARTLY FROM DESIGN CHANGES BUT ALSO FROM IMPROVEMENT IN FUEL AND ITS USE. AT PRESENT PLANT'S START-UPS ARE DONE AT MORE GRADUAL PACE WHICH REDUCES FUEL LEAKAGE PROBLEM. MOREOVER FUEL IS DRYED MUCH MORE EFFECTIVELY WHICH REDUCES HYDRATION WHICH LED TO CHEMICAL REACTION IN FUEL CYLINDERS WHICH WAS IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF LEAKAGES.

) IAEC OFTEN DEMONSTRATED WILLINGNESS TO CLOSE DOWN TARAPUR WHEN PROBLEMS AROSE EVEN THOUGH POWER CUTS ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THIS POWER SHORT AREA. BECAUSE OF DESIGN OF REACTORS REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL CANNOT GET CLOSE TO CRITICAL PORTIONS WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE AND THEREFORE NEAR COMPLETE SHUTDOWN IS REQUIRED AT THESE TIMES.

5. SHAH SAID "MOTHER JONES" ARTICLE HAS THREE PIECES OF INFORMATION ALLEGEDLY FROM INDIAN SOURCES THAT ARE RELATIVELY NEW AND REQUIRE REBUTTAL:

A) A SYMPOSIUM PAPER BY INDIAN SCIENTIST DREW ERRONEOUS CONCLUSIONS ABOUT RADIOACTIVITY LEVELS AT TARAPUR BECAUSE OF MISUSE OF DATA AND A WRONG VIEW OF PERMISSIBLE RADIOACTIVITY LIMITS THERE. SHAH STRESSED THAT THIS STUDY REPRESENTED ONLY THE AUTHOR'S OWN VIEWS AND HAD NO SPONSORSHIP BY ANY PART OF INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

B) AN ALLEGATION THAT IN 1975 AN IAEA OFFICIAL TESTIFIED BEFORE ONE OF THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT THAT RADIOACTIVITY LEVELS AT TARAPUR WERE DANGEROUS. IAEA KNEW OF NO SUCH TESTIMONY AND A COMPLETE REVIEW OF TESTIMONY BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BEFORE PARLIAMENT FOR FULL YEAR OF 1975 REVEALED NO SUCH STATEMENT BY ANY INDIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL CONNECTED WITH ATOMIC ENERGY PROGRAM.

C) AN ALLEGATION THAT THERE IS A SECRET INDIAN GOVERNMENT REPORT WHICH CONCLUDES THAT TARAPUR IS AN IMMINENT DANGER TO SURROUNDING AREA. SHAH SAID THIS CHARGE IS IRRESPONSIBLE AS THERE IS NO SUCH REPORT. ON CONTRARY, HE SAID ALL INDIAN GOVERNMENT EVALUATIONS OF SAFETY OF TARAPUR HAVE BEEN AFFIRMATIVE.

6. SHAH SAID THAT HE HAD ALSO REFUTED SAGAR ARTICLE CLAIM (IMPLIED IF NOT EXPLICIT) THAT A USG OFFICIAL AFTER VISITING TARAPUR HAD SAID THAT IT WAS A PUBLIC DANGER. SHAH SAID THAT WHILE HE HAD DISCUSSED SAFETY PROBLEMS WITH MANY VISITING USG OFFICIALS, MOST OF WHOM HE SAID HAD NEVER ACTUALLY GONE TO TARAPUR SITE, NONE HAD EVEN SUGGESTED THAT PROBLEMS WERE GETTING OUT OF HAND. HE SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT IF ANY HAD BASIC DOUBTS OF SAFETY OF TARAPUR THEY CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE TOLD HIM SO, AT LEAST ORALLY.

7. SHAH CLOSED DISCUSSION BY THANKING ME FOR INTEREST IN PROBLEM, URGED CONGEN TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH, AND PROMISED ALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POSSIBLE COOPERATION IN TRYING TO PUT LATEST SPATE OF ALLEGATIONS IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

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